

Multi-Stakeholder Process – Locality Mapping

Purpose

To provide a visual representation of information in a particular geographical context based on stakeholders' perceptions of any focus issue:

- physical, such as available resources and their use, key problem areas, (proposed) innovations, where land degradation problems are and where improvements have been noticed, or regarding a specific topic like maize trials;
- social, ownership- or gender-differentiated use of natural resources, etc.

Steps

1. Ask the individual or the group to draw the boundaries of the geographic unit being discussed. Participants can decide how they want to represent this – on paper with writing or using local materials such as sticks, stones or seeds. Remember that whatever material is chosen, you will always need a paper-based copy to enable comparative analysis. If it adds to the discussion, three-dimensional elements can be added, transforming the map into a model that emphasises landscape-level aspects of issues.
2. On whatever medium is chosen, ask the participants to draw the outline of the local area, for example, roads, towns, rivers and property boundaries. One way to do this, if you have the proper resources, is to project an overhead map onto a large sheet of paper and then to trace the required information.
3. Having prepared the map, which could be as large as a wall, people can then add their information either directly or by using sticky notes. Let them record what is most significant to them, and then ask for more detail if something you are interested in is missing. One use of a sketch map is for social mapping of household levels of well-being.
4. Several modifications to the map may be needed before those involved are happy with the final result. Include additional written comments such as quantities of interest, if necessary.
5. Once a "base" map has been made, subsequent meetings can use it to make comparisons.

Tips / Comments

Remember that only those issues that have a geographic distribution are useful to analyse with maps. Maps are useful for obtaining a better understanding of an area being studied, and for providing information and ideas on local perspectives of, for example, resources or access to services/facilities.



The larger the number of topics to be included, the more complex the maps will be. For this reason, it might be better to make several maps, with one issue/indicator per map. However, this is very time-consuming and storing such maps can pose difficulties.

Sketch maps represent how people see a physical area or a particular issue and its importance, and are, therefore, not as precise or scale-accurate as formal maps. Also, people will only show on a map what is of value to them.

So, for example, where a mining company's map of an area would emphasise the locations of ore deposits and navigable rivers, the local map of the same area but drawn by villagers may show communal areas, sacred places, pasture lands, burial grounds and agricultural lands.